

# The Scop



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# The Scop

Scop (skop) OE scop or sceop  
<OHG scoph, scof  
(poetry, fiction, sport, jest, devisioun)  
An Old English poet or minstrel.

The first use of this word occurs in Beowulf c. 496 where it refers to wandering minstrels who provide entertainment at King Hrothgar's Meadhall, Heorot.

King Alfred, in his translation of Boethius, refers to "Omerus, se gode sceop" [Homer, the good poet] c. 888.

The term was used on into the 19th century, but has become obsolete in present day English.

We revive the term as our title because it refers to the creator of literature and the teller of those tales. These Avila students are early in their writing careers as the scopos in Beowulf's time were early in the development of English literature. We invite you to read these creative writers and watch for their published works in the future.





# The Credits

The 1992-93 school year brought Avila its first-ever English Club. Also introduced was the first literary magazine, *The Scop*. The English Club is associated with the Sigma Tau Delta Chapter in Greek Society. This fraternity is an International English Honors Society and a member of the Association of College Honors Societies.

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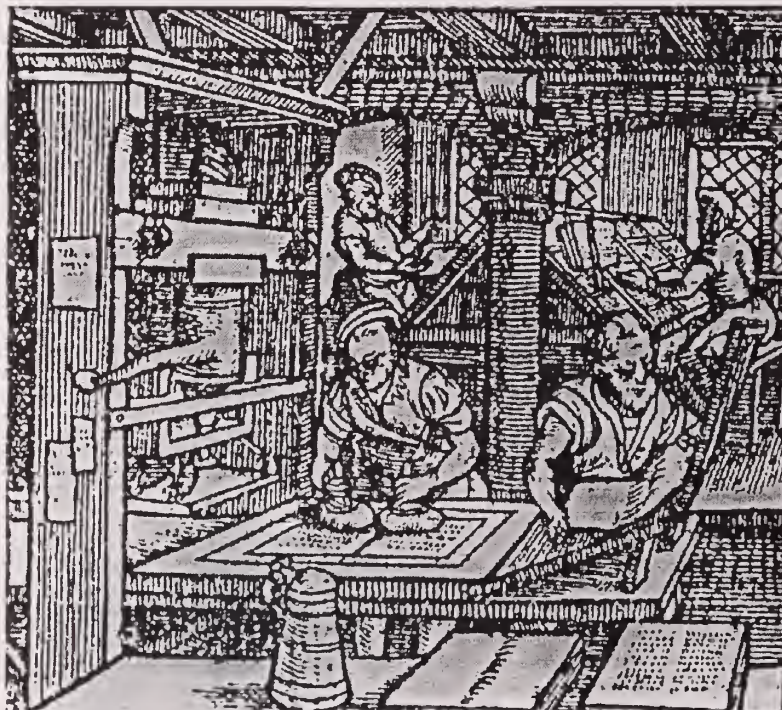
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# POETRY



# The Weathered Canopy

*by Rosalie M. B. Truman*

Sitting under the weathered canopy my view of the overcast sky was hidden. The canopy gave no shelter from the bitter cold wind that took my breath when I faced it. Chairs under the canopy stood in rank and file facing a gray, metal, flag—covered coffin. The absence of snow made the harshness of the weather and of the day more acute.

Nearby a droning voice recited a biblical farewell but I was not conscious of the words spoken. My body shook with convulsions as if to shake the reality away. A hand reached out and held my shoulder in an effort to stop the uncontrollable tremors. Fleeting, I felt care and love in the touch then overwhelming despair engulfed me.

From behind a bare tree the sounds of a horn wept. The notes clung to my agony moving me even deeper into hopelessness. Shots repeatedly raped the silence, violently bidding farewell to an honorable soldier.

Four shadows lifted the bright red, white, and blue and began to fold it in precise reverence. After the blanket of honor was squared to perfection a figure stepped forward in an offering gesture. I recoiled from the figure and flag as if they were a hated enemy. The implication of the folded flag was the end; the end was terrifying. Protocol demanded that I stand tall and accept the offering while suffocating the howl in my soul.

Holding the distinct triangle, stiff-armed, I stared unseeing at the faces as they passed one by one; the sound of their shuffling feet fading in retreat. I was alone with a folded flag, the bitter cold wind bellowing the weathered canopy and rows of chairs standing silently in rank and file.

## On Looking Back

*by Lissa Judd*

Lot looked down at the pillar of salt  
and shook his head.  
"I told her so," he said,  
and headed south.

Lot's wife shook the salt grains off  
and danced down the hill to her house  
—to say goodbye.  
That was all she had wanted to do.  
She wasn't unwilling to go.  
A simple goodbye was all she needed.  
She said goodbye, and then she headed north.

She ended up married to some guy named Orpheus.  
She was happy with him—he understood.

The moral is:

Sometimes you need to look back  
and sometimes you just can't help it.  
So if you have to, go ahead.  
Life goes on, after all.

## Untitled

*by Joan Lescinski, CSJ*

He turned in grief,  
and gazed for awhile at the sea;  
then, like a wave,  
sucked himself in,  
and rolled back to life  
in layers.

## The Fall of the Rain

*by Julie Waggener*

the rain falls gently  
the cadence on the roof like the  
gentle laughter of the skies echoing  
in my ears  
for what do the clouds laugh at but  
our inability to live as  
we are intended  
naturally, fully  
freely  
as the fall of the rain

# Untitled

by Laura Lowry-Greene

Our first flight in a hot air balloon was an unforgettable experience. Apprehension and anticipation wrestled for emotional control as the crew unloaded the equipment on a deserted country road. The leather and wicker gondola appeared to be sturdy enough, but it seemed tiny compared to the vivid red fabric field spread beside it. This impression was intensified as the fully inflated aerostat wobbled to an upright position; it was eight stories high and seventy feet wide! The next few minutes were a chaotic thrill. The pilot shouted, "Now!" and Mel and I dove headfirst into the basket. We breathlessly scrambled to our feet just in time to see the earth fall away in an exhilarating ascension. For a brief second, we hung there suspended like a fragile ornament. Then a gently assertive breeze nudged the craft into a cordial airstream, and we drifted effortlessly on our way.

We were too awestruck to speak. The panorama below provided entertaining scenes; cattle grazed amicably in one pasture while beyond the tree line a herd of white tailed deer chased each other playfully. We glided through the clean crisp air, savoring the beauty without interrupting it. The only sound was the gently "whoosh" of the burner when the pilot adjusted altitude. One moment we were skimming the surface of a marsh closely enough to touch cattails, and the next one we were soaring high enough to watch geese fly across our shadow beneath the basket. The time passed too quickly, and the setting sun reflected our reluctance to end our journey. Finally, we landed in a farmer's field with a skip and a bounce. As we sipped the ceremonial champagne, we toasted the successful flight and sealed a pledge that this first heavenly cruise would not be our last.

## Where's Jesus Now?

by Paul L. Goldman

I saw Jesus  
in the lineup  
fresh from holding tank "C"  
standing next to me.

He was a blue-eyed  
black man singing  
songs about self-discovery  
and Crackerjacks.

I said, yeah man,  
I can taste the flavor  
of your sweet words.  
He looked at me

like I was crazy,  
— that was the last time  
I saw Jesus.

## The Actor's Reality

by Julie Waggener

If you tell me what to say,  
if you give me someone to be,  
some framework I can  
pour myself into,  
if you illuminate me with the blinding,  
burning lights,  
set me upon that sacred ground  
that gives life to my limbs,  
and listen  
and watch,  
make my blood course like fire,  
make my head pound  
with the pressure of it,  
when I enter this new,  
different world,  
then I am free.  
Then you will see who I am.  
There,  
for me,  
is reality.

## Release

*by Julie Waggener*

The writing eases my mind  
seeing the confused feelings in black and white  
their blurred forms taking shape in the words  
I am confronted to know in this way they are real  
I can touch them  
understand them  
take them back  
or let them go

When the feelings are captured in words  
they become anonymous  
and speak back to me  
with a new voice  
Though this pen is such a tiny vessel  
for so large a burden as I put on it  
now  
for these thoughts  
it is enough

## Grief Angelic

*by Melanie Flink*

In her secret ceremony, secret ashes  
Private prayers greeting the night  
Courageously.  
(Fingertips surround chains of sacred beads)  
From the straightest spine, her soft head is bowed,  
Peering to glimpse eternity.  
Here, a sturdy stone house, appearing serene  
Is brimming with cluttered insides.  
Hopes and recollections  
Pulls her ever downsard, as high doubting begins to  
stack up.  
And here,  
Hidden,  
How quiet are whispers. . .  
Words heard in muted candlelight  
Down kneeling in sweet smokiness  
High rising the prayers  
With secretive thoughts waxing,  
She seems slowly to melt.

## . . . Till Death Do Us Part

*by Charlie Ream*

You do your best to get rid of me,  
But you're addicted can't you see.  
You fell in love with getting high.  
Without me, you can not get by.  
You drink me up, you shoot me in.  
In a battle with me, you'll never win.  
They call me crack, heroin, or speed.  
I'll fry your brain, consume your soul,  
As you sink deeper in this hole.  
You overdose, I'll stop your heart  
Fulfilling your vow, till death do us part.

## At The Ocean

*by Jim McElwain*

On the beach it gently brushes me now  
My chest and feet it touches, as if coming at last  
As sand and darkness and water stretch out,  
whispering  
Surprise

No, moments ago, moments ago  
We were carrying beers and watching traffic  
Kicking off shoes and flinging T-shirts  
Digging running feet into deep sand, ha!

And suddenly there it is.  
The shore, the darkness, the water,  
Heaving gently, sighing, shimmering, spraying  
Mammoth, waiting, whispering  
Surprise

## Untitled

*by Melanie Flink*

Now, as crossroads urge us to create  
Our individual paths into the dawn,  
While we strive through time and space and fate  
Will each of us become our destiny's pawn?  
As you float there and I continue here  
The time will tick while widening distance drifts.  
Our separate, lonesome hearts I cannot fear.  
Your heart I know I will hold, despite these rifts.  
And while the years will push and pull us through  
Our lives, our choice may truly make no change.  
Our plans are puzzles for fate to construe  
Though we may struggle long to rearrange.  
Have faith. Still always trust our destinies to  
Entwine one day and lead me back to you.



# Busride

*by Laura Baker*

I stare at the floor, at people's shoes,  
at the swollen feet of large old women,  
at the worn work boots of tired black men in their  
thirties  
who never had the chance to own a car.  
Traffic drives by like gusts of wind,  
the victory of Rosa Parks seems far away and hollow.

People get on and off in a blur,  
and I wonder if this is how it seems  
to doctors in hospitals  
with people being born and dying  
in the time it takes to drive down a city block.  
A man in a beat-up baseball cap gets on  
and takes the first seat he sees,  
a man whose children might delight him  
if his neck weren't so knotted up.  
His wife silently aches for the slow kisses that  
brought them close  
at some high school dance  
a billion million years ago.

The large woman with the puffy ankles and the  
printed dress  
leans hard on her cane as she makes her way down  
the steps.  
I wonder if anyone is waiting for her  
after the long walk home,  
or will she sit down to have her lemonade alone?  
We will be downtown by the time she gets home.

A small older lady sits across from me,  
a delicate pink cardigan and a clean neat blouse,  
wrinkled hands that know work and love,  
a razor-thin wedding band,  
a remnant of a husband.  
I somehow know is dead.  
She looks sweet as she stares out the dusty window,  
time and scenery flying by.

The drone of the bus lulls me to sleep  
and I dream we have tea and that she gave me her  
pink sweater.  
When I awake she is gone.

The stoplight slowly changes to green,  
the bus lurches forward and the next stop is mine.

When I get home,  
I hold my baby  
and cry for the whole world.

# Cedar Point

*by Kester Marsh*

Atop Cedar Point there lies a tree.  
Where "Far more sweeter  
Is the smell of cedar,"  
Said the Indians, "in all the land."

Within the Council Ring Shoshebe  
It stands alone,  
Surrounded by stone—  
White rocks that forbid the unworthy man.

On one crisp night,  
Amid his flight,  
An eagle sang to me.

At the sounding of Taps,  
He bid me pass  
Under moonlight to the tree.

I set out on foot with only my faith.  
I told no other  
As I went undercover  
To ponder my morals and vice.

I journeyed at a quick pace.  
And as I arrived,  
I bowed outside  
For the maiden Shoshebe, once sacrificed.

I climbed the tree  
And God spoke to me  
As I toiled and Struggled and panted.

"Love thy mother, love thy country,  
Love Me, and nature's bounty—  
These things that men take for granted."

And from this tree  
I took with me  
A sample of my endeavor.

So, as the cedar I smell,  
I remember well  
The secret to life forever.

# Free Verse

*by Melanie Flink*

While we trusting creatures (fuzzy with vaiveté)  
were out  
Frolicking in our enchanted forest,  
You used up all we had and then left.  
What a ruinous crime  
To have left us with less than the little we had before.  
Dirtying that which nourished us,  
Corrupting our sane, thoughtful chairs,  
Contaminating the beds where we once found silent  
refuge,  
You silently robbed our well-being  
Then clumsily bounded past the draperies.  
Returning to our home (not our senses), we soft,  
trusting creatures—  
A family of sort—  
Began to feel your insane presence, still hanging  
yellow and sick in the air.  
We heard echoes screaming "Too cold! Too soft!"  
Glancing around, we realized that  
Just right had been slurped down,  
Worn out,  
Used up.  
That which we had once lived for and by  
Now was swindled and destroyed.  
While within our darkening, magical forest, we once  
believed  
The sun's light was inextinguishable.  
Realization finally hits. The truth of the criminal  
sinks fast.  
There is difficulty (being soft, trusting creatures) in  
pointing fingers  
Away from ourselves.  
Yet as we do, we feel a heat within our bellies, and  
Porridge too hot in our throats.  
Our soft, gently nature slips from our shoulders  
Roars filled with fury and grief reverberate through  
the surrounding timbers  
And shakes out any magic we had known.

# Bones

*by Jim McElwain*

I sometimes think about bones  
Bones that used to have eyes looking around them  
Minds that wondered, calculated

Rib cages that had lungs, that took deep draws of air  
Bones that took the form of human, the form of life  
I am kin to these bones, their form is my form

Their visage has preceded me  
But they passed their cup across to me  
I moistened my lips today

Did the bones find peace, I wonder  
While they still had flesh?  
Did they finally round out their wanderings?

Did they live in laughing fullness or  
Strain to find a smile? Did they ever stop  
Astonished? Were they ever pierced unspeakable?

Perhaps someday they will whisper reply  
As my form transacts, transforms  
Into theirs

And I drink more and more from the cup they passed  
And see more and more of their days  
As I follow these steps—mine or theirs I can't tell

I see the story, magnificent and ancient played  
Once again! New sights, new paths echo  
With the ring of a sound familiar

They are fixed, these bones but they seem to change  
Like musty pages suddenly speaking  
Like lyric motives waking breathing

Come to life again!

I know this life, I say, as more fluently it streams  
Through my lungs, my heart, my lips and limbs  
Till I breathe and speak, I sing with the bones!



# Recipe For A Successful Diet

*by Cara Chisholm*

## Ingredients:

- 2 quarts of previously failed diet attempts
- 1 Nutri-System cuisine entree (Jenny Craig can be substituted)
- 8 cups of determination
- 1/2 cup Slim Fast mixture
- 1 package (24) Dexatrim diet pills
- 5 hours of exercise

## Directions:

Mix diet attempts with determination until smooth and set aside. Blend Slim Fast mixture and Nutri-System cuisine on a low speed until thoroughly blended. Add this to the diet attempts and determination and mix by hand. Bake at 350\* for 30 minutes. Let cool for one week. Ice with exercise and sprinkle Dexatrim pills on top. Serve with Quaker Oats Rice Cakes. Enjoy!

## Variations:

- Jenny Craig can be substituted for Nutri-System cuisine.
- Sugar free candies can be substituted for Dexatrim diet pills.
- Opti-fast, chormium, water and diet soda are all flavor enhancers.

# Your World

*by Lee Ann Rickard*

An old woman stares blankly out into the world from her cracked window. A frayed hair net attempts to hold her hair from flowing freely. Her worn face and tired eyes, so dark and quiet, will share no stories.

The window is from an old building. The paint is chipped and fading, the glass is cracked and dirty. A piece is gone from the glass and mixes the air so there is no distinction from the outside to in. Metal locks seal the window to protect the fragile woman from the world who has put her here. She has no more will or fight to care. She will just stand there and watch the life go by her from her cracked window. Fading in with her building around her, many will not notice her.

# Suspended

*by Gail Trudeau*

Lucid as a waterfall  
that flows unrestricted,  
the grape runs fluently  
from the bottle's neck,  
over its bubbled lip.

The bouquet rises  
as the splash  
into the crystal goblet  
fills the air  
with vineyard emanation—  
Tranquil is the moment.

With hearty finesse,  
the rich flavor  
anoints my pallet.  
I close my eyes,  
submitting to the will  
of taste's sensation—  
Transcending is the moment.

Glistening in the light  
of the sun's warming rays,  
I float in the stream  
of Cabernet life.

# Final Performance

*by Julie Waggener*

Hang up the costumes.  
Strike the set.  
Tear down the walls of the place where  
imagination was given flesh for a while.  
And we await another opportunity  
to re-enter the world where,  
for a time,  
fantasy dons the cloak of reality  
and we become our dreams.



# Call Me

*by Larua Lowry-Greene*

The heat had been oppressive for days, and today the sun was a merciless tyrant. I closed the shutters on the windows in expectation of another record breaking scorcher. Half asleep in the hazy semi darkness, I was lulled by the murmur of the ceiling fan as it reluctantly plodded through the stale air. My lethargy was deepened by the weary metronome of an antique clock which had long ago exchanged its musical chimes for dull thuds on the hour.

A persistant ringing nagged me out of my stupor. I was tempted to ignore the shrill interruption and let the answering machine record a message, but I shook off the shadows, found my feet, and stubled down the stairs to grab the phone with clumsy hands.

As I struggled to concentrate, the sounds emitting from the reciever transported me from my tidy kitchen into a crowded bar room. A jukebox blasted a scratchy rendition of Willie Nelson lamenting "Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain," while a surly bartender sent beer bottles careening across the pool table to the pack of loudmouths on the other side. I could almost see the smoke hanging in the stagnant air, and my eyes burned as I tried to identify my caller. The stranger took a long drag off his cigarette, caughed, paused, and in a low voice said, "Darlin', is that you?"

Great, I thought. It's a drunk.

"Laura," he insisted, "is that you?"

This is better than great; it's a drunk who knows my name.

"Laura, this is your daddy."

Oh, this is the best. It's a drunk who knows my name and has a cruel sense of humor.

The peculiarly one sided conversation came to an abrupt end as I slammed down the receiver. Immediately realizing what I had done, I stared in horror. I had longed for that telephone call for thirty-five years. Now, sobbing in disbelief and frustration, I knew my waiting had only begun.



*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th-century manuscript. The text is written on aged, stained paper with some visible ink bleed-through from the reverse side.]*

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# Rip Cord Dummy

by Karen Katcher Baum

The Wellsville Skydiving Company housed itself in a ramshackle building poised in the middle of an abandoned Kansas wheat field. The only object that distinguished it from other houses in the area was an ominous looking structure that resembled a hanging platform. The tower loomed thirty feet above the ground; from an extended beam, a single rope swung idly in the soft breeze.

Our instructor, who introduced himself as Bob, greeted us on the front porch sporting a full-leg cast and crutches. He casually explained the injury resulted from a jump he had made earlier in the week. Bob herded us into a small room with dusty, hardwood floors, no furniture, and suggested we make ourselves comfortable. The first order of business, he said, was to go over the basic mechanics of skydiving. Using a chalkboard, Bob illustrated the more complex components of the sport. He first drew a picture resembling two giant ant hills, labeled them "Mae West," and informed us that if our parachute looked like that after it opened to activate our reserve chutes. He also warned us of a "streamer." A streamer, he explained, was when your parachute opened, but *didn't* inflate. He mumbled something about hitting the ground in less than two minutes.

Next, we went to the equipment room — a dusty, wooden area that didn't look previously occupied. There we measured for vests and parachutes. A parachute is "worn" by weaving a strap between your legs and fastening it to a harness over your shoulders. It's not very comfortable and forces you to walk cowboy-style. After the personal tailoring, we waddled out of the equipment room and moseyed over to the practice tower.

As Bob stood next to the platform, leaning on his crutches for support, he explained the necessity of following his landing instructions to the tee. The consequence, he explained, would be a broken bone. Without much confidence in Bob's words, we all attempted to follow his directions: knees bent, land feet first, fall to side of thigh, throw legs over head, stand up. When we had mastered the technique of landing, we positioned ourselves on the platform of the tower and attached ourselves, one by one, like tether balls on a rope. Bob would yell, "Jump!" and we hurdled ourselves off the platform and landed: knees bent, feet first, fall to side of thigh, throw legs over head, stand up. Safely attached to our tether line, and with the formula for landing, everything seemed to be working smoothly. We tried to forget Bob's cast.

Next, we learned how to pull our rip cord. On our first five jumps, a static line would open the chutes automatically. Our sixth jump, we would be allowed to "free fall." To prepare us for the sixth jump, we learned to pull a "dummy" rip cord attached to our vests. The key to survival seemed to be seven seconds. . . you had to be airborne a full seven seconds before you could pull the cord. If you pulled too soon, the chute could hit the plane and your body dragged along like a sky message. If you pulled too late, you'd hit the ground at speeds known to be hazardous to human life. The way to ensure exactly seven seconds had elapsed was to count: jump one thousand, look one thousand, reach one thousand, four one thousand, five one thousand, six one thousand, pull one thousand; then look up to make sure you had a full chute instead of a Mae West or streamer.

After four hours of instructions, Bob dubbed us "ready" to jump. Since there were seven us, our dive master divided us into two groups. Fortunately, I was in the first group. We walked over to an area that looked more like a very long dirt driveway than a runway. In the middle of the landing area stood a bright yellow windsock attached to a twenty-foot pole. Bob told us that it was extremely important that we watch the windsock and be aware of the current wind conditions. He explained that the parachute travels ten miles per hour, but with a wind speed of twenty-five miles per hour, then we would hit the ground at thirty-five miles per hour. The parachutes had a slit in them that the wind could pass through to control speed. By turning the slit to the wind, the parachute slows down. We didn't worry too much about the windsock; it hung limp like a wet noodle.

Crouching to get inside the plane, two concerns came to my mind. First, the plane was really small. There were not any seats except for the pilot's. Sitting on the floor, I tried not to think of myself as a convict on death row. Second, the instrument panel was mysteriously missing its gauges. Black holes stared at me where I thought important equipment should be. I felt a little uncomfortable that the plane wasn't more high tech. Somehow I thought if everything was new and shiny, then my safety would be ensured. The pilot explained that weight was of considerable importance, and therefore the reason for the missing pieces. While scrutinizing the obesity of one of the other passengers, I sat quietly and contemplated my future.

Once airborne, all my concerns disappeared. The



sky seemed to be waiting for me. Little pillows of clouds begged me to jump on them. The land below looked harmless, the fields divided into neat little squares like a child's checkerboard. The pilot interrupted my daydreaming to announce that the first jumper was to take position. He assigned me jumper number three. My job was to make sure the static lines of the first two jumpers fastened securely to the tether in the plane. My friend, Bill, was first. The pilot instructed Bill to climb out onto the wing and wait for his signal. Bill jumped, and was quickly followed by the second jumper (I was glad to be rid of the extra weight). It was then my turn! I shook with excitement! The pilot checked my static line, pulling it taut to make sure he fastened it securely. He then gave me the go ahead and I climbed out of the plane onto the wing. Then I froze. I couldn't believe how petrified I was. All of a sudden, the simple task of jumping seemed impossible. I quickly calculated the length of the wing and knew without a doubt that I would never be able to clear it when I jumped. I also knew that the ground was much farther away from outside the plane than it was from inside the plane. The noise from the engine was deafening, adding to my increasingly paralyzed state.

Being the independent assertive person that I was, I crawled right back inside the plane. I announced to the pilot that I wouldn't be jumping that day; I had changed my mind. He shook his head from side-to-side, but said nothing. When we landed safely on the ground, Bill asked me why I hadn't jumped. I immediately started crying — not because I was sad, but because it had been my idea to go skydiving in the first place. Looking up at the sky, I decided it wasn't that high after all. I knew I could do it.

So, back into the plane I went with the second load. The pilot strongly suggested that I go first, but I decided that since I was so good at checking the static lines from my previous experience, I would go last. Before I really had time to muster up all my courage, I found it was my turn, again. The pilot instructed me to go back onto the wing and prepare for my jump. I went out, took one look at the ground, and immediately crawled back inside. I apologized profusely to the pilot and requested to land with the plane one more time. I knew then that I would never jump. We landed safely and all my friends expressed sympathy and support. I started crying again — this time due to humiliation and frustration. I really wanted to jump, but it didn't seem as if I had what it took to get over my fears. The pilot walked over to me and told me that he would be willing to go up one more time. He said he had a secret that would help me jump. He seemed really concerned, so I

decided to try again.

For the third time, I crawled into the plane. This time the instrument panel didn't concern me, nor did anything else about the plane. The airplane was my security. My enemy was the emptiness of the sky. When we had reached 5,000 feet, the pilot indicated that the wind sock was full. He explained that I would have to be careful about positioning my back to the wind when I landed. ("Ha," I thought, "I have absolutely no intention of jumping.") Aloud I thanked him and smiled convincingly. I then crawled out onto the wing with the full intention of staying there a few minutes and then returning to the womb of the plane. The pilot checked the static line, then signaled the "okay." I was just about ready to turn around when I felt a push from behind. I was floating through the air several seconds before I realized what had happened.

I spent the next ten seconds completely catatonic. I probably would have remained in a state of shock had I not been aware of the complete silence of everything. I immediately looked around for the airplane, but I couldn't see it, nor hear it. There was absolutely no sound at all. The silence was so foreign to me that I couldn't think of anything else. Looking down, however, made me realize that there were other things I probably should be thinking about. Unfortunately, the first thing that popped into my head was that I had killed myself. I spent the next few seconds apologizing to God because I didn't want to spend eternity in purgatory. I wanted to make sure God understood that it was not suicide — it was murder.

The next thing that I noticed was that my feet were dangling in mid-air. I realized that I had never before seen my feet with that much space between them and the ground. It seemed incredibly absurd. I wiggled my feet around and watched them in comparison to objects 5,000 feet below me. It was about this time that I came to the realization that I never checked to see if the static line had opened my chute. Looking up I saw the white canopy, full of air, just as it should be.

About 1,000 feet from safety, I started to hear voices yelling. I saw Bob and several other people crammed into a jeep racing across the field. They seemed to be yelling something at me. "In shock, in shock," they screamed. I thought, "I'm not in shock, a little scared maybe, but not in shock." I tried smiling big to let them know I was okay, but they continued screaming. Bill looked as if he was performing a Mexican hat dance, jumping up and down, pointing frantically in the direction of the runway. There, standing at full attention, was the windsock. "Oh my God, WINDSOCK," I thought. They were trying to tell me to get my back to the wind.

# Tapestry

by Lissa Judd

I reached up with my right hand to grab the control line that would turn my parachute and me around so that I would be facing "back to the wind." This procedure would slow me down so I wouldn't hit the ground at sixty miles per hour. I kept feeling around for the control line, but I couldn't reach it. Looking up I saw it was several inches beyond my extended fingers. Scared, but desperate, I tried unsuccessfully to grab the elusive line. After several attempts, I realized that the only way I could reach it was to undo my parachute and propel myself up the line. Undoing my vest, I was able to grab the parachute strap with my left hand and hoist my right side up to the control line. I did this with such force that coming back down sent me into a right spin. After spinning like a top for several rotations, I stopped, back to the wind. Even though I had slowed down considerably, I had also flown over the entire forty-five acres of designated landing space. I headed straight towards a freshly plowed field, a wound held together by the stitches of a train track.

The ground came up at me faster than I had anticipated. I hit feet first, butt, then head — not exactly the order Bob had prescribed. I then stood up, thankful nothing felt broken. Just as I was ready to celebrate my life, I hit the ground again, hard. My parachute, with an agenda of its own, started traveling across the field, dragging me in protest. I tried standing, burying my heels in the soft dirt, only to be thrown face first into the ground. Spitting mud out of my mouth and trying desperately to stand, I knew the only way to deflate my chute was to grab that damn control line, again. I lunged, but kept missing it, over and over. The chute seemed to be on a non-stop flight for the railroad tracks. Once on the tracks, I tried in vain to stand, or at the very least, run as fast as the chute was dragging me. Behind me I heard the distinct whistle of an oncoming train. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Bill running diagonally across the field towards the renegade chute. He jumped headfirst onto the parachute and deflated it instantly. We both jumped off the tracks and stood, silently, as the train sped by.

Bill leaned over close to me, pulled the dummy rip cord from my vest pocket, and whispered, "Maybe next time we'll go bowling."

Something was wrong. Lancelot had been waiting for nearly an hour, and still the Lady of Shalott had not come down. He shifted uncomfortably in his armor. Being a hero suited him most times, but today the armor was especially heavy and he was getting hot. He just wanted to get it over with. He had had a long day and he wanted to go home.

His part in this story was small and he didn't really care much about it, but he was familiar with it. For some reason the Lady had to sit in her tower and never leave it. She lamented about its shadowy condition and sat at her loom weaving. Her tapestries were of the scenes she saw in the great mirror that reflected the view out her window. She never looked out the window itself, though, for she knew a terrible curse would come upon her if she did. The first part of the story had gone as planned. Lancelot rode by on his white horse and she saw him reflected in her mirror. He watched her turn from the mirror and look out of the window at him. Then came the rending splinter of glass as the mirror cracked into a thousand pieces, and he heard her cry, "The curse is come upon me!"

That was an hour ago. He couldn't see her anymore, and no sounds came from the tower. Now she was supposed to come down, her weaving tangled around her, and get into her boat. Then she was to drift down the river to Camelot, singing and waiting to die. Lancelot's final part in the story was to see her lying dead in the boat and to think how beautiful she was and how sad it was that she should meet with such a tragic end.

That was how it was supposed to go.

Something was definitely wrong.

It was time to go after her. He forced the door of the tower—heroes are used to doing that sort of thing; Lancelot did it especially well. As he climbed the stone stairs, he began to feel a little unsettled. Things like this weren't supposed to happen, and this whole situation was giving him the creeps. He arrived at the door and peered into her dimly lit room. The floor was covered with shards of glass from the broken mirror. Lancelot certainly was glad he had armored shoes to protect his feet. And in the far end of the room he could barely make out the Lady sitting at her loom. Although he couldn't tell much about her at first glance, like what color her hair was, or what her dress was made of, he saw something he recognized—she had the look of someone who had just taken a mortal wound and



knew it. But she wasn't crying, or raging, or anything like that. She was patiently untangling one thread at a time and rethreading her loom.

It seemed inane. After all, she was about to die. It seemed to Lancelot that a bunch of thread would be the last thing he would want to worry about right before his death. "Why are you wasting your time with this mess?" he asked.

She turned angry, red-rimmed eyes to him, looking like a she-wolf defending her last living cub. But when she spoke her voice was calm. "It's mine," she said simply. "It needs to be complete."

Lancelot realized he had no lines to say and felt suddenly awkward. Fortunately, the Lady seemed not to notice and turned back to her loom. She was almost finished threading it now. As he watched her sort out what was left of the chaos of threads he began to feel sorry. Sorry that it had to happen this way.

"I guess all this is partly my fault, isn't it?" he began.

"Yes," she replied softly, not looking at him. "Will you forgive me?"

She looked at him again and let out a breath. "I don't know." She meant it. Then, as if she could spare him no more time, she turned and tied the last thread onto the loom. Lancelot fought a growing feeling of impotence. Heroes are unaccustomed to this.

"Is there anything I can do?" he asked uncomfortably.

She bent, picked a skein of thread off the floor, and held it out. "I need you to hold this."

Lancelot took off his gauntlets and unbuckled the armor covering his forearms. What a relief. Settling himself on a stool beside her, he obediently took the thread she held out. The Lady took one end of the thread, tied it to her shuttle, and began to weave.

Lancelot became unaware of the passage of time. He knew that the light falling on the loom from the window changed, but that was all. Sometimes there seemed to be no light at all but still the Lady wove. Hours, days, he didn't know how much later, she stopped. She looked at the half-finished tapestry, her hands tightening on the shuttle, then turned to him.

"Why do you give me such ugly colors?" she demanded in frustration. "What?" Lancelot managed to ask out of his confusion.

Her eyes were shiny and she clenched the shuttle so tightly he was sure it would break. "I can't make anything with these." She spoke in measured tones, but there was a slight shake to her voice. This tapestry was desperately important to her. If only he could understand why. He wished things would just happen by the book, the way they were supposed to. And anyway, what did he have to do with colors?

"Never mind," she said abruptly. Like a lone soldier taking on an entire army, she lifted her chin and turned back to her loom. She pulled on the shuttle and a new length of thread rolled off the skein. He glanced down at it. It was sort of a brown. Not a bad color, he thought to himself. But then Lancelot was a little color blind. Maybe he wasn't a good judge of that sort of thing. The Lady pulled off more thread. But now it was pale yellow, and then dull red—or green, he couldn't quite tell. Lancelot shook his head. This was weird.

The Lady continued to weave, oblivious. Occasionally she would turn, her eyes glancing back to check on the size of the skein, to see if she needed a new one. They were lovely eyes, Lancelot found himself thinking, wide and luminous. He found himself watching the way her long hair fell across her face, anticipating the moment when she'd absently brush it out of her eyes. It really was a shame. He felt he should explain himself—so she wouldn't get the wrong idea about his being here.

"Listen, I need to tell you something," he began. She continued to weave, but she seemed to be listening. "It's not that I don't want to but. . ." Her shuttle fell to the floor with a hollow clatter and she bent to pick it up. "I can't be what you want." There was a sharp intake of breath from underneath the loom. Lancelot forged on as the Lady sat up. "Please don't take it personally; it's just that I have responsibilities. I have obligations." She winced as if in pain and looked as though she might cry. He had hoped she wouldn't take it hard. He was only trying to do the right thing. An itch underneath his breastplate begged to be scratched. He wished he could just take the damned armor off, but heroes can't take their armor off until they're alone. It's a rule. Lancelot ignored the itch and looked back at the Lady. She was clutching her hand into her chest. A dark trickle of blood rolled from her knuckle to her wrist. "You're hurt," he said, the words rasping unpleasantly from his throat.

She let her hand drop towards him and opened her fingers. Imbedded deep in her palm was a jagged triangle of glass from the mirror. The Lady sat still, gazing at it as if she'd only just noticed it. Lancelot knew that sort of thing did happen. Sometimes heroes don't realize they've been wounded until after the battle is over.

"Let me help," he offered, leaning forward to take the glass from her hand. When he got close though, her body tensed and her face whitened with anger. She took hold of his wrist and drew the glass down his forearm, cutting him from elbow to wrist. The skin ripped and blood began seeping from the cut. Lancelot was too stunned even to be angry. What could have possessed her? Tragic heroines never act



like this. He sat still, knowing he should be feeling pain but feeling nothing. He couldn't do anything but watch the dark liquid falling onto the tapestry below. It dropped in richly colored spots that spread once they hit the tapestry, devouring it. Some of it was his, some hers.

Feeling returned finally, the sense of smell first. Like any valiant hero, Lancelot was used to the smell of his own blood—it was earthy, familiar; it cleared his head a little. “Why did you do that?” he asked. The Lady rose, taller than he thought she'd be. “Because I never asked for this,” she said and pulled the glass from her hand and flung it through the window. Her jaw tightened and her eyes looked slightly watery. But those were the only indications that she had felt any pain at all. And Lancelot knew from years of experience in pulling arrows and other sharp objects from his flesh that that had to have hurt her more than she let on. He had never thought she'd show such strength.

“You never asked for what?” he asked, trying desperately to understand this woman who was becoming less and less what he had expected.

“For all of this,” she went on, her eyes suddenly dark. “A curse, you, a tower full of cobwebs and shadows. I'm so sick of shadows! I keep saying that. Why will no one listen to me?” She stopped as if she were suddenly empty, as if she didn't have enough blood in her veins to go on, and rested her good hand on the loom, studying her creation. She ran her fingers over the deep burgundy splotches. “I think it's beyond repair,” she said softly, with the empty desolation of a young widow faced with preparing her husband's body for burial. “But it must be complete.”

For the first time Lancelot actually looked at the tapestry. Although it was as yet unfinished he could make out the figure of a woman standing straight and proud. She was graceful and intricate, but only complete from the shoulders down. Lancelot realized that he wanted very much to see her face. He stood and watched, oblivious of his bleeding arm and everything else, as the Lady finished her task. She worked slowly now, favoring her injured hand a little, but she never stopped.

At last she sat back and stretched; the tapestry was complete. How incredible, Lancelot mused to himself, that what had begun as a chaotic tangle of threads could become such a beautiful creation. And beautiful it was—the once dull threads shimmered on the loom and somehow, somehow the dark blood was what made it so arresting. It danced in intricate swirls all through the woman, her hair, her hands. And now that he could see her face he realized she was the Lady herself.

The creator ran her fingers around the edges of

her tapestry; it seemed to Lancelot that she scarcely breathed. “She's magnificent,” he said finally.

“Yes,” the Lady whispered. Then she turned to him and smiled, something he never expected from the Lady of Shalott. Tragic heroines seldom smile—certainly not the way she was smiling, as if she truly had something to celebrate. And although he had a feeling the smile was not really for him, he was entranced nonetheless.

Lancelot imagined that she would go now; he did not want her to. “Let me put something on your cut,” he offered, grabbing at the first thing that came to his mind. He didn't know much about dressing wounds, but he wanted to give her something, anything.

“No,” she said gently, “let it be.”

“But it will scar,” he said inanely, as if a scar would matter to her now—she didn't have long to live once she boarded that boat.

She nodded. “I know.” She said it as if a scar was nothing to be ashamed of, like a hurt is something that does you good.

Suddenly Lancelot was tired of being a hero. To hell with it all, he thought. To hell with empty obligations and responsibilities and armor that doesn't fit right. He was not going to do nothing and let this splendid woman walk out that door to her boat. He refused to obey the story and be falsely sorry at her death. Although for some reason he couldn't shake the ridiculous notion that she had somehow, impossibly, changed her fate.

He took her blood-encrusted hand and kissed it. “My lady,” he said, suddenly more nervous than he had ever been with a woman, “I have a horse outside. May I accompany you?”

She smiled, the smile of mingled fear and wonder of one who will see the world with her own eyes at last, and pressed her hands gently on his before she released them. “No thank you,” she said, “I'll walk.”

# Southern Fried Grandma

by Jeanne McCarty

Samantha Jean was concerned. Grandma quite frankly, was not doing well. Samantha Jean worried about the unexpected phone call from Grandma summoning her to the rustic farm house outside of the city.

"Samantha Jean? Samantha Jean, can you come on out to the house? There's just somethin' I gotta tell somebody before I bust," Grandma had said over the telephone.

"Sure Grandma, I'll be right out. Just give me fifteen minutes."

"OK hon, but do get on out here directly." Grandma sounded anxious. The drive out to Grandma's had been fast due to light traffic in the country. Samantha had always had pleasant memories of her grandmother. Little things like Grandma teaching her about the family's Confederate heritage and cooking lessons, the art of making grits and the family's secret recipe for fried okra. Grandma had a garden and canned vegetables and made jellies every year. During canning season, a family activity, Grandma would tell stories of Great-grandpappy Bradford, a sergeant in the Confederate Army, and all of his legendary adventures. This was a happy time. Samantha enjoyed being with her grandmother because Grandma was always very honest and direct. "Honesty is the best policy," Grandma was fond of saying.

When Samantha parked in front of the house, she was cheerful and looking forward to seeing Grandma in one of her out-dated, yet pretty, full blue dresses with her hair pulled tightly back into a bun and a freshly made up face, with lipstick red as ripe tomatoes and perfectly applied. "Samantha Jean, I'm here in the living room," Grandma had called out when Samantha had entered the house. As Samantha walked down the hallway past the old family portraits on the wall, a black and white testimony of the generations of Southern pride in the family, she heard the familiar squeak of Grandma sitting down on her old worn sofa.

Smiling warmly, Samantha entered the living room to find Grandma lying on the sofa in her aqua blue robe staring wide-eyed at the television and eating pickles from a jar.

"Grandma, are you OK?," she'd asked in complete confusion.

"Oh, honey, I'm so glad you could get out here to see your po' old Grandma." Samantha was in shock. She could not remember a time she had seen

Grandma lounging in her bathrobe this late in the morning.

"What's wrong?"

"Baby Girl, there's just something I gotta tell ya. I's been watchin' Sally and well she said—"

"Sally who?"

"Sally Jesse Raphael, hon'. You know the lady on T.V. Well, Sally was talking about people who lied to their families. She's got a Nazi on there and a mass murderer and a mercenary."

"Grandma, it's T.V.! They always have psychopaths and social misfits on these talk shows. Look at Geraldo. He talks about Charles Manson at least three times a week. It's nothing to worry yourself over."

"Well, hon', these folks on Sally's show are all mothers or grandmothers and their families never knew until TODAY!" Grandma's voice was becoming strained, but continued, "Honey, I just gotta tell. I can't keep this all canned up inside me! Samantha Jean, I'm not from the South!"

With that confession, Grandma rolled over onto her back and stared blankly at the ceiling. Samantha fell into a chair next to Grandma's sofa and exclaimed in frustration, "What!"

Eternity passed before Grandma spoke again.

"It's true!" she cried, "my family is from England originally. My momma and daddy lived in Boston all of my life. I left home and moved to Tennessee when I was sixteen. I lived with one of my mother's sisters. I was so jealous of what Aunt Patty's family had. Civil War heroes, good cookin', accents! That's when I decided to deny my Bostonian roots and create new Southern roots!" Grandma was delirious. "I really think the main factor in my decision to make Southern roots was when I first saw *Gone With the Wind*. Scarlett was my hero!" Grandma had stepped over that thin line of sanity into the realm of a talk show host's career achievement.

"Grandma, you're just a little under the weather. You've been out in the bean patch too long. Just relax."

"I can't!" Grandma yelled, "I just can't relax!" Grandma's Southern accent was giving way to a New England one.

"What about Great-grandpappy Bradford. What about how he raided Union mess halls and single-handedly captured one hundred troops? What about all that?" reasoned Samantha.

"All a figment of my imagination."

"Look at those pictures on the wall! That's the



family!"

"They were on sale at the close-out of an antique store."

"Our family pictures are bargain close-outs from a bankrupt antique shop?"

Grandma nodded slowly as she continued to stare at the ceiling. Samantha and her grandmother sat in silence for several long moments. Samantha broke the quiet as she asked her grandma one last important question, "Does Grandpa know?"

## Mute Laughter

*by Marilyn Lee*

It was 5:35 p.m. when Julie walked into the dark comfort of Mirabelle's. She had been off work a mere five minutes and had come to seek some small refreshment and the friendship and consolation of a co-worker. It was just Monday, but, oh, what a Monday it had been. Mary Beth was to join her as soon as she finished clearing her desk and checking in with her boss. Julie glanced at the thirties style clock over the long bar, Mary Beth was running late. They only had one half hour until their bus came. She hoped it hadn't slipped her mind.

Julie moved toward the back of the room and slid into the cushioned stool at the end of the bar. She waved at Gene, the bartender, they had gone to high school together, and positioned herself so she could watch the door. Julie ordered a light beer and looked at the clock again. Time was slipping by as if the clock face were coated in ice and the hands couldn't hold on to their minute. A phone rang in the background and Gene headed toward the front of the bar before she could get his attention to ask how his day was going. If a bartender has a bad day on Monday then there is no hope of sympathy for your problems from him.

Mirabelle's was starting to get crowded. The men coming in had already loosened their ties and the make-up of the women could not really be described as fresh. If Mary Beth didn't hurry she wouldn't have time to drink anything or survey the possible dating material present. She enjoyed man-watching more than drinking anyhow.

"Excuse me, I saw you from across the room. Haven't we met somewhere?" Julie groaned a very big silent groan. She turned blank, blue eyes to look at the man standing behind the bar stool next to hers, Mary Beth's barstool. He was a basic police description: Caucasian male, 5'10", 160 pounds, brown hair, blue eyes, average this, average that. So average, in fact, that you couldn't make a line chart of this guy that moved anywhere off the center of the page. Julie had just left a relationship with Mr. Average Office and had no desire for a sequel. "No, I

don't think so." It wasn't much of a come back but it had not been much of a come on and it was all she could think of as she checked the clock again. Where was Mary Beth? Maybe he would think she was meeting someone if she kept looking at the clock.

"Could I join you for a drink?" he asked as he seated himself on Mary Beth's stool. Gene walked up just then and took his order—a strawberry daiquiri. At the same time he slid a piece of paper toward Julie. The only words she could read were "Mary Beth". Gene's writing had not improved since high school. It was so bad then that he couldn't even read his own notes. He had to pay the class brain to take notes for him. Well, she assumed that Mary Beth was not going to make it and she had to figure out how to give this guy the boot, soft shoe style.

There was a drone of one sided conversation. Julie just nodded and Uh-huhed. The Dow Jones and investment banking were just not stimulating topics after you had stared at a computer terminal all day that flashed nothing but numbers with no hope of a conclusive total. She finally caught him in a weak moment, he had to stop to catch his breath somewhere between GM and Big Blue, "Well, excuse me, it's been very . . . listening to you." She ran over the words so fast that she hoped he hadn't noticed the missing mystery word. She couldn't be mean enough to say that it had been very boring listening to him but neither could she be dishonest enough to say it had been nice. "My bus should be along any minute now. Goodbye." "Say, could I give you a call sometime?" The inward groan roared so loud Julie was afraid the whole bar could hear it, then it started to purr. "Sure, I guess so." Julie reached for the slip of paper with the message of her abandonment on it. Underneath the only legible words of "Mary Beth" she wrote Mary Beth's phone number. "Here," she pushed the note of desire toward him, "Good-bye." She gave him her prettiest smile that was fueled by mute laughter this time instead of a groan as she headed toward the door, the bus and freedom from average.



# A Cancer

by Gail Trudeau

At night, before I drifted off to sleep, I would pray that he would die, but then I'd wake up the next morning to his bellowing cry to come help him to the bathroom or get him a drink of fresh water. One morning I caught him urinating in the closet; that night I prayed a little harder.

It was November 27, 1975 when Mom had the family home for Thanksgiving dinner. She insisted that this was the way Dad would want it. "He loved to have the family together for holidays," Mom reminded us. Then added, "It would mean a lot to him to know you were all home."

I resented her talking like Dad was already dead, and I resented her request to spend my Thanksgiving this way. I wanted to spend the day with my boyfriend's family, away from the smell of cancer, away from the suffering of cancer and away from obligation of caring for cancer.

"He's worse," my older sister announced as she sat down to the dinner table, choking back a tear.

"How would you know?" I thought to myself. "You haven't seen him in days. He's been *worse*."

"I don't think we can get his medicine down him anymore," Mother replied. "When Gail gave him his pill to swallow yesterday, he choked on it."

"Yes, I almost killed him with my very own caregiving hands," I said to myself sarcastically. "Wouldn't you all have applauded that!"

"He's not been awake all day," Mom continued. "I think we'll have to admit him to the hospital this weekend. Does anyone object?" Mom questioned concerningly, but in a direct sort of way; like she already had her mind made up.

"That's probably best," my older brother said, indulging himself in a heaping bit of mashed potatoes. "It would be easier to you, Mom."

"It would be easier on Mom if you and the rest of the family would stop in more often to help take care of him," I thought to myself, sparing Mom the bickering that would follow if I said it aloud. "Everyone overlooks the fact that Dad asked us to keep him home to die. Hell, we're all here in his honor for dinner, what about honoring his wish to die where he wants?"

I was diverted from my resentful thoughts when Mom asked, "Anna, would you trim Dad's mustache? You know how he always liked you to do it."

"Yes Mom, consider it done. I'll see to it after dinner," I promised.

I always took care of Dad's grooming while he was ill. He was particular about his grooming, but somehow I didn't think he cared about anything right now except dying. His thin grimacing face seemed to speak his wish, however, no one seemed to hear. And no one seemed to notice that he hadn't smiled in over a month, not even when I massaged his head and feet like I did when I was a kid, to help him relax after a hard day's work. He hadn't said much in the past week, except to tell my younger brothers and sisters to get the horses out of the barn or they would burn.

"What's he talking about?" they questioned Mom.

Then she told the story of how when Dad was a young boy the barn caught afire and he had to get the horses out. That was the last time he said anything, except when he shook his head "no" the day before when I tried to get him to take his pills. I knew I should have listened when he started to choke on them. Much as I had been praying for him to die, in the moment of his choking I pleaded he would not choke to death on the pills I was so set on him swallowing. From that point on, listening to Dad was something I took very seriously.

I had finished trimming Dad's mustache and started manicuring his nails when the rest of the family looked in to bid their good-byes.

"Leaving so soon?" I asked with a hint of sarcasm.

No answer.

"You might consider dropping by the hospital when he gets there this weekend. He won't last the weekend," I warned.

No answer.

The next day Mom called the paramedics to bring him to the hospital. They carefully hoisted his limp skeleton-like body from the rented hospital bed to the stretcher. He didn't wake. I hoped he was dreaming about a better place, and that his unconsciousness didn't permit him to know he would not die at home.

I watched as the ambulance drove him away, thinking to myself about him getting the horses out of the burning barn. I knew it was a matter of time before Dad would be saved and the barn would be left to burn, with all of us inside.

# Birth of an Idea

by Gail Trudeau

She often studies in this room, or writes letters or poetry to the gentle ticking sound of the battery operated kitchen clock, the ever-present reminder that tomorrow will cast its timely presence upon her unfinished work of today. No matter. It's only time.

A sun-shiny spirited welcome greets her at the crack of dawn, squeezing its rays between the slats of the ivory-painted window blinds to that favorite spot on the Indian print divan where she fell asleep the night before. An empty long-stemmed wine glass sits upon the glass top of the brass legged end table, reflecting a tiny rainbow in the corner of the ceiling, where a lone cobweb, clinging by two strands, sways to the movement of the air. Books are strewn about the floor, leaving their impressions in the cushy tan carpet, while the book case in the corner sits half-empty, with gaping holes and a dust covered top. Like a crown upon the head of knowledge a once-was bottle of Gundlach Bundschu from California's vintage reserve is proudly poised on the book case top, plant cuttings pouring from the bottle's neck where once the cabernet flowed with sparkling memory in honor of friendship's majestic might. The label bears an artistic appeal with two shadowy figures reaching with outstretched arms, grasping a glass of wine in the moonlight. Next to the bottle-made-vase lies a small round porcelain container with 24K gold detailing on the lid which circles a soft green peacock displaying golden feathers. Just above hangs a matching plate next a gold leaf tree that alights on a mirrored shelf of oak which also hangs on the wall.

She is surrounded by love, as heart expressions permeate this small room. A tiny heart shaped picture frame made of potpourri lends itself feminine whisps of a petite 6 year old posed in a 1920's red flapper costume, with long blonde locks cascading over her shoulders. Other pictures of this same child at different ages are scattered about the room. Among the hearts upon shelves of oak perch two miniature wooden monks engrossing themselves in books of biblical study.

Two large speaker cabinets tower over her as if to oversee her well-being. One of the speakers supports a set of brass candles, while the other supports a bronze sculpture entitled "In the Hands of God", a Christmas gift from her husband in their early years of marriage. The sculpture's luring expression of erotic experience seizes her imagination as the two sculpted bodies passionately exchange the act of love. Her fantasy continues as her eyes move to a

water color poster of rose and teal which bears the name "Erotica". Reflecting itself in an oak framed mirror are two bearded faces sculpted from thick pieces of bark which hang on an adjacent wall.

At that moment she remembers the bearded man she was once in love with and the cold winter day he was taken away from her. "Paranoid schizophrenia," she thinks to herself. "Another man living inside the man I loved, tormenting his heart, his head, his being."

He was violent, this man that lived inside the man she loved. He maliciously destroyed everything and everyone in his path, especially the man he lived inside, until at last he won the final battle.

Their life was filled with much joy before he was overcome with the illness that changed their lives. Up to that point he responded well to treatment and medication. His doctors said he was lucky; "That most paranoid schizophrenics had to be institutionalized."

Their love brought them a child. "The greatest gift of all," she exclaimed while the two of them peered through the glass in the hospital, admiring their sleeping baby girl delivered the day before. He planted a kiss on her cheek and handed her the ruby heart ring he had been saving for this special moment.

"Another heart for your collection," he teased as he took the ring from her and slid the token of his love upon her slightly swollen finger.

On wintry Saturday nights they would read to each other from Kahlil Gibran's "Love Letters to Mary Haskell" or Rilke's book of sonnets, while curled up in each others arms under a blanket waiting for sleep to transform them to a dream-state existence.

Before their child would be old enough to know her father, her mother would find him curled in a ball on a blood stained carpet in the middle of the living room floor, his wrists bearing the evidence of his retreat to the other which lived inside.

She stares at the place on the carpet where he had laid that wintry day five years ago today. Startled back to reality by the sound of a car racing down the street outside the large picture window which frames the world outside, she picks up her pen and paper. It is in this room and through this window that ideas are conceived out of love, out of art, and into the world of being.





PLAY



# Animal Psychology

by Careese L. Crider

Setting: An animal psychologist's doctor's office. The psychologist is a one hump camel with a large malleable nose. He wears a monocle and smokes a Sherlock Holmes pipe. On the wall hangs his diploma from ASU and a painting depicting a man dressed in hunter's gear, on all fours, pointing at quail. Behind him is an Irish Setter standing on two legs with a rifle resting across his paws. The camel, Dr. C. A. Fraud, hides behind his desk, but the tip of his hump can be seen above it. Mr. Gerbil walks hurriedly in.

Gerbil: Ah! There you are Dr. Fraud. I'd thought you'd left the country for a month.

Fraud: I did? Uh—oh yeah I did. I just came back because I forgot my pocketwatch. But I'm not staying. I have to leave immediately to attend the international animal psychologists' convention at Bismarck.

Gerbil: Please, doc, stay for a little while. I've got to talk to you. I'm still having those same old symptoms. You've got to help.  
[During this Dr. Fraud is trying to push Gerbil out the door when a receptionist's voice off stage says, "Dr. Fraud, your ten o'clock appointment is here."]

Gerbil: How can you have another appointment today if you have to leave so soon?

Fraud: Umm—this one was a real emergency, a real nutcase, if you know what I mean.

Gerbil: [Pushing back into the office] But I am a real nutcase. Let me talk to you for a few minutes please, please, please, pretty please with sugar on top. I'll still pay you for a full session.

Fraud: [under his breath] You bet you will. [Into the intercom] Will you tell Mr. Gill it will be a few minutes I'm in a meeting.

Receptionist: [Through intercom] Yes, sir.

Gerbil: Mr. Gill is here? I didn't know he comes to see you. What's his problem?

Fraud: That information is confidential.

Gerbil: If you don't tell me I'll go insane.

Fraud: You already are.

Gerbil: Oh yeah.

Fraud: What's on your mind, Gerb?

Gerbil: Same old Story. I feel like my world is crumbling down around me. My lungs feel like iron girders are pressing down upon them and I can't catch my breath. I still feel like I'm constantly running, but never getting anywhere, like I'm trapped in an infinite circle. Help me! I can't go on living like this anymore. There's got to be a cure.

Fraud: There is.

Gerbil: There is?

Fraud: Yes.

Gerbil: What is it? I've gotta know!

Fraud: You must sell the metal wheel in your house. Give it to charity. Give it to Goodwill. I-lave a peephole sale. Anything—just get it out of your life for good, and you'll never have to see me again.

Gerbil: Is that all? [long pause] Why didn't you tell me sooner?

Fraud: You weren't ready.

Gerbil: Not ready! My God! My lifespan is only thee years and I've been coming to you for eighteen months. I've got only a half year to live before the hairless hands flush me!

Fraud: You must live each day to the fullest now.

Gerbil: I could have been living each day to the fullest a year ago!

Fraud: You must understand that if I had told you this any earlier you would not have had the responsibility and mental ability to rid yourself of the circle of hell. Now, if you'll excuse me I have another patient waiting. Your visit today comes to a total of sixty dollars.



Gerbil: I could have gotten my cage cleaned for less than that, but instead you'll clean out my pockets. Here you go. [hands Fraud the money]

Fraud: [As Gerbil walks out the door] Think how meaningful the rest of your days will be since together we've conquered your illness. [under his breath] and I've been able to afford a new harem. Next!

[a goldfish enters]

Fraud: Hello, Mr. Gill, what can we do for you today?

[Gill walks in rolling an oxygen tank behind him while holding the mask over his nose and mouth. He flops onto the couch.] [Gill takes his mask off when he speaks]

Gill: Same old, same old.

Fraud: Talk to me Gill. Tell me what is on your mind. What are you feeling and thinking right now at this moment in your life.

Gill: I feel like I can't get a word in edgewise.

Fraud: [interrupting] That's good. Let it out. Just let your thoughts flow from your mind down your brainstem and out your mouth.

Gill: Alright already! I will, I will! Just shut up for a second will ya?

Fraud: Very good. Keep it coming, let's hear what else is on Gill's mind today. [beckoning with his hooves]

Gill: I feel bad. I just found out that brain is fish food. All this time I thought they were feeding me dehydrated seafood. I think I'm losing my scales [pulls some out of his head]. This morning I woke up and found my fatiler floating upside down. My heart sank.

Fraud: Oh well, one down, one to go.

Gill: No, my mother was floating upside down last night. I think it's the brain food.

Fraud: Congratulations, now with both of your parellts gone you can finally start healing your inner child, and you don't have to worry about an Oedipus Complex anymore either.

Gill: Yeah. Okay. But now that my parents have gone to that Sea World in the sky, I don't have anything to do but swim back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

Fraud: Alright, I get the picture.

Gill: I don't mean to be a snoopy, nosy neighbor, but I can't help seeing what goes on outside my glass house, and it perturbs me a little bit sometimes. I mostly wonder what the others will do to each other. I see the cat and dog lying together on the sofa, and then the dutch-dwarf rabbit comes in the room and catches them, so he jumps up between them to keep them apart.

Anyway, enough about them. My problem is I have claustrophobia and aquaphobia.

Fraud: Well, you need to spend more time on dry land and get another bigger tank.

Gill: [taking a long drag from his oxygen mask] Be serious, doc. I can't stay on dry land.

Fraud: I know, but just spend a few hours out of each day on the beach to relax and get away from the hustle and bustle and inner ear dizziness of aquatic life and waves.

Gill: Oh, okay, I understand. [rolls his eyes up in his head] Now, how am I supposed to get a bigger tank.

Fraud: Keep swimming into the glass sides until the two-handed ones buy you one.

Gill: Well, thank you very much for your time and advice, Dr. Fraud [they shake fin to hoof], but I'm running out of oxygen. Gotta go. Bye. [rushes out of the door]

Fraud: [checks his pocketwatch for the time, taps his pipe, adjusts his monocle and hollers] Next!

[Enter a fluffy, long-haired black male cat, Andre, and a female golden retriever, Violette]

Andre: [singing] I'm too sexy for my shirt, too sexy for my hat to sex— [he starts coughing and spits up a hair ball into the brass spittoon], too sexy for my fur balls.

Violette: Hey, don't throw that out. That could have a few good chews left in it.

Fraud: Please, have a seat on the couch, Andre

and Violette. Since you're both new patients I would like to run some preliminary tests before we begin. Now, Andre if you'll give me your arm I'll take your blood pressure first. [He takes Andre's blood pressure and it is a very low score.] Ah, ten over fifty, that's purr-fect for a cat. Now, Violette [who is panting so hard she sounds like she's going to hyperventilate] I'll take yours. Oh, my. Two thousand over fifteen thousand. That does seem high.

Violette: Well, Dr. Fraud, I am a pure full bred Golden Retriever bird dog.

Fraud: In that case you're pressure is perfect, too. Now, I want to do an eye test on each of you. Andre, I want you to follow this feather with your eyes. [Andre follows the feather but moves his head] No, no, Andre, don't move your head, only your eyes. [The doctor continues moving the feather up and down and from side to side. Andre stops moving his head as ordered, but stares straight ahead with his eyes popped wide open trying to see the feather without moving his head. Finally, his instincts take over and, without blinking or moving his head he snatches the feather away and eats it].

Fraud: Hmm. Very interesting reflex. Now, Violette, let's try you. [Fraud pulls out a tennis ball, he moves it from side to side to side and up, but as he brings it down Violette (who was watching it very intently with her eyes only and does not move her head at all) snatches it and curls up in a corner of the couch chewing on it.]

[Fraud clears his throat and straightens his jacket, taken aback.]

Fraud: You both seem to be doing well physically for a cat and a bird dog. Why are you two here to see me today? [He sits down in his Chair behind his desk and pulls out a tape recorder from a drawer. Violette jumps up, walks over and tries to put it in her mouth.]

Violette: What's this? Can I chew on it? Huh, huh, can I, can I?

Fraud: No, you can't, and it's a tape recorder.

Violette: What do you need it for?

Fraud: I tape all my patient's confessions, I mean conversations. It's standard practice.

Violette: Can I chew on your desk? No? How

about your chair?

Fraud: No!!! Go sit down on the couch with your friend and tell me what your problem is besides chewing. [under his breath] Damn crazy lunatics. Why do I always get them? Anyway, what brings you two cutie pies here on this lovely afternoon? [through his teeth]

Violette: Well, Dr. Fraud, our relationship seems to be a little bit strained nowadays, and I don't know why. [Violette strokes Andre's fur to soothe her nerves after having been yelled at by the doctor.] Why— Andre your fur is so smooth today. Where's all those lumpy, bumpy hair matts I love to play with so much?

Andre: I went to the groomer's [uncomfortably].

Violette: What groomer's? [angrily]

Andre: Uhh—Chez Vixen's.

Violette: Chez Vixen's! What were you doing at that slut's shop? You know I hate her!

Andre: I like her. She makes me feel like a real Tom. She likes my hunting adventures and admires my skill in stalking and capturing huge snakes.

Violette: Humpf! The snakes you drag home are never dead. Why I was almost scared out of my skin when I picked one up to throw it away and it moved.

Andre: Don't pick on me, missy! Remember the time you ate that "Pedigree" dog food and turned into a Pomeranian? It took fifty pounds of "Purina" to get you back to so-called normal.

Violette: Oh yea, I wouldn't be digging up the past if I were you. What about your Uncle Albert who got hit in the head by hail and then let you and all of your brothers nursed him when you were kittens. That's your problem. You and your latent desires.

Fraud: [aside] I'll be the judge of that.

Andre: Hey, leave my family out of this. Your mother and father were siblings. [Violette growls at him]

Fraud: Well, Violette and Andre, we've learned quite a lot in this little session of ours. You two obviously have a relationship you want to work on and you don't want to split up.



Andre: We couldn't split up even if we wanted to. WE live in the same house with a gerbil and a goldfish.

Violette: And a Dutch Dwarf Rabbit

[Violette and Andre snicker together]

Andre: Oh yeah. That crackpot. He's prejudiced as hell. He hates us and our relationship.

Violette: But, we're not going to let him spoil our fun. Are we dear?

Andre: Not at all sweetie. [Violette and Andre scooch closer together on the couch smiling]

Fraud: [Interrupting them perturbedly] That may be so but this hatred of your housemate is very draining on your relationship, and you both need some long psychotherapy.

Andre: How long?

Fraud: Approximately five to ten years.

Violette: How much money will it cost?

Fraud: Oh just two hundred dollars a session, one hundred for you and another hundred for Andre, of course, and you would both need to meet with me together three times a week.

Violette

& Andre: [in unison] Forget you, doc! For that much time and money we could both go back to school and earn our own pompous-assed Ph.D.'s in psychology and cure ourselves and the Dutch Dwarf Rabbit!

[They stomp out together, paw in paw.]

[In walks a black and white Dutch Dwarf Rabbit named Luke, who is a kind of a Don Knotts nervous type.]

Luke: Dr. Fraud, did you see that interspecies couple? Aren't they disgusting? They're the ones I've been telling you about these past months. I can't understand how she can allow her golden locks to commingle with his overgrown, "Chia-Pet" like black hair. That animal sheds like a hobo. What will the children look like?! [throws his hands up in the air in exasperation while shaking his head]

[Violette and Andre come back in.]

Violette: Excuse us, but we left the tennis ball here and I do love what it does for my breath. [She picks the ball up from the couch where Luke is now sitting] By the way, I heard someone ranting and raving, while I was out in the hall, about interspecial relationships and children. Was that you Luke, you neurotic bundle of fluff? Well, anyway, you needn't worry your pea-sized brain because I'm spayed.

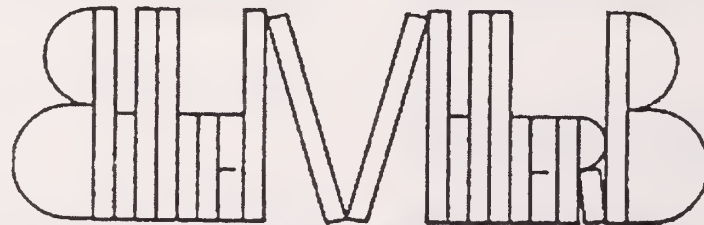
Andre: And I'm neutered. Some rabbits!

Luke: Oh, you are? Really? Well in that case, never mind.

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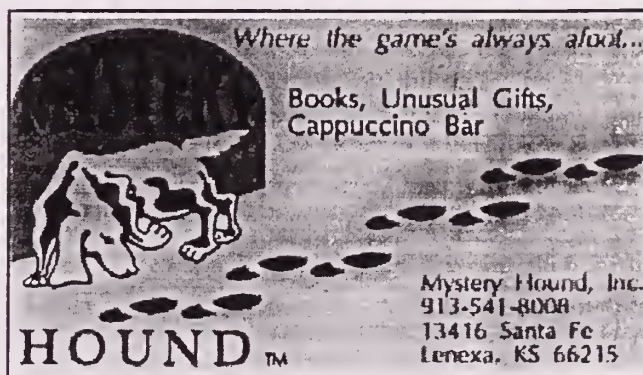
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